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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA SUMMIT

¶1. Summary: While Taiwan's dailies gave significant coverage April 21 to the meeting between U.S. President George W. Bush and Chinese President Hu Jintao Thursday, coverage also focused on the controversial battle over the ownership of the Sogo Department Store, which First Lady Wu Shu-chen is allegedly involved in, and other political issues. With the exception of the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, all the Chinese-language papers reported on the Bush-Hu meeting on their front page. Both the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" and pro-unification "United Daily News," ran a banner headline on their front pages that quoted Bush as saying he does not support Taiwan independence. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a banner headline on its page two which juxtaposed Bush's statement of not supporting Taiwan independence and Hu's statement of opposing Taiwan independence. The "China Times" also devoted two-thirds of its page two and the whole of its page 13 to Hu's U.S. trip and the issues discussed during the Bush-Hu meeting. The "Liberty Times" spent the whole of its page three reporting on the Bush-Hu meeting and protests outside the White House against Hu's visit. The newspaper also ran a news story on its page four with the banner headline: "Bian Urges China to Talk to Taiwan's Elected Leader." The front-page news story of the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" carried the headline that said: "During the Bush-Hu Meeting, a Falun Gong [Practitioner] Protests against Hu in His Face."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial said only with its democratic values can Taiwan fight against the totalitarian China. A "Taiwan Daily" editorial said Washington's move to downgrade its reception of Hu revealed its doubts about China's dictatorship. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" commented on President Chen Shui-bian's letter to the "Wall Street Journal" Thursday prior to the Bush-Hu meeting, saying "Chen said exactly what he should have been saying to the U.S. all along: Taiwan has no intention of making life hard for Washington, but has been forced to take proactive measures to protect its democratic system from Beijing." A "United Daily News" news analysis said Bush took a preemptive move by mentioning the Taiwan issue first; a separate "United Daily News" commentary said Beijing is not anxious to resolve the trade and international issues that Washington is concerned about because it firmly believes that as long as China keeps developing, the United States will need China more and more. End summary.

A) "Only with Democratic Values Can [Taiwan] Resist Barbarous and Totalitarian China"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (4/21):

".... Taiwan should continue deepening its democracy, so that it can

resolve the island's inner differences and conflicts, strengthen its Taiwan-centered values, and forge its modern ethnic consciousness. When it comes to the fight for Taiwan's sovereignty, once Taiwan is able to distinguish between friend and foe and see through China's aggressiveness to annex Taiwan, all the Taiwan people will wake up to their national awareness and they will join hands together to fight for Taiwan. Democracy and freedom are the best tools to fight a totalitarian dictatorship -- this is an eternal truth revealed in the human history. Taiwan should make use of its democratic achievements to resist the barbarous China. This is the best way for Taiwan to survive."

B) "[The Fact That] Bush and Hu Each 'Have Different Interpretations About Hu's Visit [to the U.S.]' Reveals Washington's Doubts about China. Taiwan Should Strengthen Cooperation with the United States and Japan to Prevent the Threats Posed by China's Rise"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 100,000] editorialized (4/21):

"... To sum up, democracy is the basic reason why the United States has downgraded its reception of [Chinese President] Hu Jintao this time. Also, it was because Washington wanted to keep a distance with China's anti-democratic regime. More importantly, the United States wanted to convey its doubts about the strong military buildup and hegemonic attitude of the totalitarian China. ..."

C) "Right People Make the Difference"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (4/21):

"So President Chen Shui-bian has finally gotten the hang of things. He sent a letter to the 'Wall Street Journal' clarifying his policies just as Chinese President Hu Jintao prepares to meet with US President George W. Bush. In his letter, Chen said exactly what he should have been saying to the US all along: Taiwan has no intention of making life hard for Washington, but has been forced to take proactive measures to protect its democratic system from Beijing. ... Given the US's schizophrenia over Taiwan, it is little wonder that Chen was hoping to do something to generate goodwill in Washington. US leaders have a sad history of allowing themselves to be led around by the nose when the Chinese come calling, their pockets stuffed with trade deals. ..."

"The Presidential Office should now be commended for its preparations for Hu's visit to the US, which included a flurry of activity in the last week between Washington and Taipei to ensure that there was nothing that would give the White House a reason to crack down on Taiwan. No less importantly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the American Institute in Taiwan are clearly executing their roles properly. It may be simplistic to ascribe this simply to personnel changes, but the lines of communication between the two governments have clearly improved. What a difference a de facto ambassador makes."

D) "Bush Takes a Preemptive Move with Regard to the Taiwan Issue, While Hu Tries to Secure Each Inch of His Territory"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang said in a news analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (4/21):

"... There were many issues on the agenda of the Bush-Hu meeting this time. But these issues can be classified into two major parts depending on the U.S. interest: One part is how the United States thinks China can play the role of a 'responsible stakeholder,' and the other part is that Washington would want Hu to define and carry out the theory of '[China's] peaceful development.' ..."

"On the surface, the United States seemed to have offered China a beautiful garland of being a 'responsible stakeholder' to wear on its head." But in reality, it wants to urge China to fulfill the commitments made when it joined the World Trade Organization, namely, flexibly adjusting the exchange rates of the Renminbi and opening its market to the U.S. products. Also, in terms of North Korea's and Iran's nuclear programs and the campaign against terrorism, Washington does not want to see China 'walk the road as

it pleases ' but desires to restrain the direction of China's rise. It remains doubtful whether China will really listen to the United States. ..."

E) "A Summit That Is Friendly But Produces No Substantive Results"

Cheng Rei-yao, chief of the Department of American and European Studies at National Chengchi University's Institute of International Relations, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (4/21):

"... Hu Jintao wants to create an international image and status as a leader of a big nation, maintain China's stable relationship with the United States, alleviate bilateral trade conflicts, and seek to create a strategic climate and opportunities for China's peaceful development. In general, except for the Taiwan issue, for which Beijing hopes to get an immediate response from Washington, Beijing's objectives lie in the medium- and long-term management [of the China-U.S. relationship]. As long as it can handle Washington's requests in the short term, Beijing is not so anxious to resolve the trade, economic, and international issues that the United States is concerned about. In addition, Beijing believes that the United States will need China more and more as China keeps developing.  
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